
North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Future

By

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[The following are excerpt of the speech given to the Prague, Czechoslovakia Meeting held in November 2002.]

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) future in the run-up to the Alliance's summit meeting in Prague next November. The preamble to the 1949 NATO Treaty states:

[The Parties] are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic Area.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) achieved these purposes during the Cold War. Since then, it fulfilled them in the Balkans through its peacekeeping work in Bosnia and in the war against ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. NATO has adapted itself to play an important role supporting the current U.S.-led war on terrorism. In the future, an expanding list of NATO members will continue to promote Euro-Atlantic stability. The Alliance will continue to safeguard the community of North Atlantic democracies against threats of all types, including, I suppose, threats we cannot now even anticipate.

Since 1949, broad, bipartisan support for NATO has been an element of U.S. national security policy. This is a sign that the phrase Atlantic community is meaningful. The United States and its European and Canadian Allies indeed constitute a community. We are not just a collection of members of a multinational forum. We share fundamental beliefs for example, about the nature of human beings, their rights and their relationship to their respective governments. And the security of the community's different elements is of a piece. Among the Atlantic community's members, there are large common interests economic and political as well as military and there is true fellow feeling that motivates action. For an alliance of this kind to remain vital for over fifty years, there must be more than a treaty underlying it. There must be sentiment a sense of community—that makes the Alliance richer than a simple legal obligation.

This point, I think, was illustrated in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attack on the United States.

NATO and our NATO allies responded to the attack quickly, loyally and usefully. Less than 24 hours after the World Trade Center and Pentagon were hit, the NATO Alliance, for the first time in history, invoked Article 5 - the collective defense provision of the *1949 NATO Treaty*. Since last fall, seven NATO Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft have been patrolling U.S. skies. The war effort and the post-Taliban reconstruction and security effort in Afghanistan are benefiting from individual NATO Allies' and Partners' contributions. Such Allied contributions have come within and outside formal NATO structures. All those contributions, however, are the result of more than fifty years of joint planning, training and operations within NATO.

Those contributions have entailed great sacrifice. America is not the only NATO ally to have lost soldiers in Operation Enduring Freedom. The forces of our Canadian and European allies also have suffered losses, as have other coalition states in Operation Enduring Freedom.

In his statement to NATO defense ministers last June, Secretary Rumsfeld listed terrorism first among the new threats facing the Alliance. The others he mentioned were cyber-attack, high-tech conventional weapons, and ballistic and cruise missiles armed with weapons of mass destruction. Members of this Committee also recognize these new threats. As Senator Lugar pointed out in a recent speech:

The terrorist attacks on the United States of last September have graphically demonstrated how vulnerable we are. And when I say 'we', I mean the West in general, including Europe. The next attack could just as easily be in London, Paris, or Berlin as in Washington, Los Angeles or New York. And it could involve weapons of mass destruction.

NATO's core mission remains the collective defense of its members, as stated in Article 5. But there is room and need for change in how NATO fulfills its responsibility to protect the Alliance's interests and promote its principles. NATO will need to transform itself to handle new threats and serve its other purposes.

NATO's Prague summit meeting this fall will be an important event. At Prague, the United States will stress three themes: new capabilities, new members, and new relationships.

New Capabilities

NATO's military forces are the essence of the Alliance's essential function: common defense. But the notorious "capabilities gap" between the United States and its European and Canadian Allies continues to grow. If this divergence is not reversed, it will impede the Allies' ability to operate with U.S. forces in the future and will, ultimately, weaken the Alliance's political cohesion.

So our first goal at Prague must be to begin to remedy the capabilities deficiencies within NATO. We shall work to secure the commitment of allied leaders to specific measures and definite timelines to fix shortfalls in four top-priority areas:

First: Nuclear, biological, and chemical defenses to protect allied forces, and missile defenses to protect Alliance forces, territory, and population centers against the range of missile threats.

Second: Platforms (and support capabilities) to transport Alliance forces rapidly to wherever they are needed, and to supply them until their mission is completed.

Third: Communication and information systems that will connect alliance forces securely before and during combat and peace enforcement operations. And

Fourth: Modern weapons systems such as all-weather precision guided munitions, jamming systems, and capabilities to suppress enemy air defenses that will enable allies to make first-tier contributions to combat operations.

To achieve these goals, we believe that Allies should seek both to increase defense spending and to use their resources more effectively by pooling efforts.

At Prague, the United States will also seek agreements to streamline NATO's command and force structures. As you know, the United States is changing its own Unified Command Plan. Likewise, NATO should ensure that its command and force structures are reorganized for 21st century missions.

One of the U.S. Unified Command Plan changes has implications for the job of the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic (SACLANT). SACLANT heads one of the two existing NATO strategic commands. Today, the Commander of the U.S. Joint Forces Command serves as SACLANT. The new U.S. Unified Command Plan, however, will refocus the U.S. Joint Forces Command solely on its transformation mission. Secretary Rumsfeld has approved the decision to divest the Commander of the U.S. Joint Forces Command of his SACLANT responsibilities.

Various allied officials have told us that NATO's connection to an American four-star Combatant Commander, based in the United States, is an important trans-atlantic link for the alliance. We are consulting with Lord Robertson, NATO's Secretary General, and with the allies on the future arrangements for SACLANT. We are intent on bolstering, not cutting, the Alliance's trans-atlantic links. We shall do so in ways that serve the common interest in promoting defense transformation and streamlining the NATO Command Structure.

New Members

Our second goal at Prague will be to invite additional European democracies to join the Alliance. President Bush declared his policy on NATO enlargement in a speech last June in Warsaw:

I believe [the President said] in NATO membership for all of Europe's democracies that seek it and are ready to share the responsibility that NATO brings. As we plan the Prague Summit, we should not calculate how little we can get away with, but how much we can do to advance the cause of freedom.

Mr. Chairman, I recall that you, Senator Helms, and other Members of this Committee wrote to President Bush a few weeks before his Warsaw speech, saying:

It is in America's strategic interest that the process of NATO enlargement continue.

The events of September 11 have intensified the President's commitment to this goal. The Administration wants to preserve a bipartisan approach as we move forward. An enlarged alliance of democratic states with improved military capabilities and interoperability, joint defense and operational planning, and realistic training exercises will be better able to fulfill the Alliance's purpose to increase the security of its members and provide for their common defense against terrorism and other threats.

The aspirant countries are demonstrating their ability to operate with the Alliance. For example, in the past year, seven of the nine NATO aspirants contributed forces to the NATO-led operation in Kosovo, and eight of the nine participated in the NATO-led operation in Bosnia. Aspirants also have contributed in various ways to Operation Enduring Freedom for example, through intelligence, over-flight rights, use of their air bases, offers of personnel to support operations in the region, and public and diplomatic support. They have conducted themselves as we want our allies to act.

Mr. Chairman, we recognize that enlargement of the alliance is not an exercise free of risks and difficult judgments. People of experience and wisdom warn of the dangers of making the alliance unwieldy. They do not want the alliance to dilute its military capabilities through enlargement and they are concerned about NATO's relations with neighbors. They want to ensure

that any enlargement will strengthen NATO's ability to perform its defense mission. They want to ensure that the commitment of new members to the alliance's principles and work will be real and enduring. We respect these views and share the concerns. Enlargement must be done with care.

As part of this process, the Department of Defense is working with the aspirants through bilateral and NATO channels to help them become the best possible candidates. We are assessing the state of each aspirant's military structures, its implementation of defense reforms, the readiness of its military units dedicated to NATO led missions, and the military value it can bring to NATO. We are telling them clearly where improvements are necessary.

New Relationships

A third goal for the Prague summit is to strengthen NATO's relationship with Russia and revitalize its relations with members of NATO's Partnership for Peace.

President Bush has made a top priority of creating a new, cooperative U.S.-Russian relationship. That effort is integrated with the work we are doing with the NATO Allies to enhance the NATO-Russia relationship based on specific, practical cooperation. The goal is to erase any vestiges of Cold War hostility. Fostering improved NATO-Russia cooperation can induce further democratic, market and military reform in Russia and contribute to improving Russia's relations with its neighbors. President Bush supported a NATO-Russia Summit at the end of this month as a means to press forward on this path.

As we do so, NATO will take care to retain its ability to decide and act on security issues as its members see fit. Protecting Alliance solidarity and effectiveness is of the utmost importance. The North Atlantic Council will decide, by consensus, on the form and substance of our cooperation with Russia. Russia will not have a veto over Alliance decisions. And we shall ensure that NATO-Russia cooperation does not serve to discourage or marginalize other Partners.

Conclusion

We plan to use the Prague Summit to improve the Alliance to make it more capable militarily, better able to secure the peace and more tightly knit across the Atlantic. I believe we have strong, bipartisan support for this approach. I look forward to continuing to work with you and all Members of this Committee as we move toward the 2002 Prague Summit.